

The Preservation Compact

A Rental Housing Strategy for Cook County

**For Immediate Release
For More Information**

**February 9, 2010
Christine Kolb, Preservation Compact
773-549-2655
312-259-0936 (cell)**

Cook County Energy Savers Program a Top U.S. Retrofit Performer

Innovative Program Moves to Scale Quickly, Achieves Effective Energy Savings

(Chicago) Chicagoland's Energy Savers program is proving that residential energy retrofits can scale-up quickly, reaching thousands of residents and delivering cost-effective, large-scale benefits.

In just 18 months, the Cook County Energy Savers program has retrofitted 3,500 apartments and other rental units in Chicago and neighboring communities, typically cutting energy consumption by 30 percent.

Operated by CNT Energy, a division of the nonprofit Chicago-based Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), Energy Savers has conducted energy efficiency audits for more than 9,000 housing units in 300 buildings. The program has more than 2,500 units in construction and is on track to complete more than 8,500 retrofits by the end of this year, making it one of the country's largest and most successful programs for retrofitting existing multi-family, rental housing.

Energy Savers also offers low-interest loans from Community Investment Corporation to help building owners pay for new heating and cooling equipment, new windows and insulation, and other energy conserving improvements. The program is one of six key initiatives spearheaded by The Preservation Compact, a public/private partnership working to preserve and improve the supply of affordable rental housing throughout Cook County.

"We are excited that Energy Savers has achieved such solid results in such a short period of time," said Julia Stasch, co-chair of the Preservation Compact and Vice President for Human and Community Development at The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. "Thanks to its partners' expertise and the program's efficient design, Energy Savers has quickly delivered on three key objectives: keeping our region's rental housing affordable, creating new jobs, and achieving significant energy efficiency gains."

Launched with seed funding from the City of Chicago and three major foundations, Energy Savers has a sustainable business model that covers the program's ongoing costs through long-term financing shared by building owners and local utilities.

Building owner Don Wenzel rehabilitated five rental properties on Chicago's south side with Energy Savers, reducing his buildings' energy bills between 26% and 43%. "I saved over \$30,000 on my operating costs last year," Don said. "This is the best investment I've made in my property in the last 10 years."

Energy Savers also addresses one of the top priorities of the Chicago Climate Action Plan by directly reducing energy used to heat or cool homes and commercial buildings across the Chicago area. According to CNT analysis, such uses account for 70 percent of the City's entire greenhouse gas emissions.

Cost-effective energy benefits and its successful financing approach have made Energy Savers the model for a new region-wide effort to take energy efficiency services and financing to scale for both single and multi-family housing and for non-residential buildings. The new effort, which builds on Energy Savers' sustainable business model, is backed by CNT Energy and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

Currently, CMAP is playing a direct role in managing the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program for the State of Illinois in the Chicago Metropolitan region. Executive Director Randy Blankenhorn commented, "As we move into implementation of *GO TO 2040*, our 30-year planning roadmap, CMAP believes that large-scale energy efficiency strategies will be integral to achieving environmental sustainability and realizing the plan's vision."

The Chicago Community Trust, a regional community foundation, provided funding for this ambitious planning process. "The relationships and trust necessary to jointly pursue such bold goals as preserving thousands of affordable rental homes are exactly what's needed to achieve a meaningful scale of cost-effective energy efficiency," said Terry Mazany, President and CEO of the Trust. "This was proven recently again in Chicago, as local foundations, CNT Energy, and CMAP teamed up to assist all 42 local governments with federal energy block grant assistance, creating local energy use profiles to inform their program plans. This huge task would have been impossible to achieve within a few weeks if undertaken by each municipality independently."

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About the Preservation Compact

The Preservation Compact brings together the region's public, private and nonprofit leaders to address the loss of affordable rental housing stock in Cook County. Energy Savers is one of the Compact's six Keystone Initiatives.

About CNT Energy

CNT Energy is a division of the Center for Neighborhood Technology. CNT Energy operates programs that help consumers and communities obtain the information and services they need to control energy costs and become more energy efficient. CNT Energy operates the Cook County Energy Savers Program, as well as cutting edge programs and research in the areas of dynamic electricity pricing, building performance, and regional energy planning. For more information about Energy Savers, contact Anne Evens, Director, CNT Energy, at 773-269-4045 or anne@cntenergy.org.